1457

Liberty

NOT THE DAUGHTER BUT THE MOTHER OF ORDER — PROUDHON

Vol. VIII.—No. 37. NEW YORK, N. Y., SATURDAY, APRIL 30, 1892. Whole No. 219.

"For always in thine eyes, O Liberty!
Shines that high light whereby the world is saved;
And though thou slay us, we will trust in thee."

JOHN HAY

On Picket Duty.

It will be noticed that, in resuming publication in New York after its brief suspension, Liberty is deprived of the benefit of Mr. Yarros's name as associate editor. But it will also be noticed that Mr. Yarros's pen figures in its columns as prominently as ever. His contributions to the paper will continue with reasonable frequency, the dropping of his name being due solely to the fact that his other engagements at a distance from the office of publication prevent the more intimate collaboration which both he and I desire.

The "Twentieth Century" has been sold to the Humboldt Publishing Company, and Mr. Pentecost has severed his connection with it. Its future policy is not yet announced, but J. W. Sullivan is to have an active part in its editorial conduct. The Humboldt Social Science Series has been State Socialistic in its character, and I shall not be surprised if the "Twentieth Century" manifests similar tendencies under its new management. Perhaps Mr. Sullivan's influence will prevent this for a time, but, being an opportunist, he probably will yield in the end. Whatever the paper becomes, it never can undo what it has done. With a circulation never attained outside of France by any journal equally bold in its policy, it has carried the truths of Anarchism to multitudes of people who have set their faces to the front and will never turn back. It is deplorable that those who have made it what it is should be obliged to transfer it to others. Mr. Pentecost, it is true, declares his retirement "a sweet relief," but I am sure he is nursing a delusion. Never shall I believe that a man of his temperament would choose the practice of law rather than an untrammeled editorship, except under pressure of necessity.

The recollection of the late pleasant exchange of cordial invitations between Mr. Bellamy's adherents and the philosophical Anarchists still lingering in Liberty's mind, it is necessarily a very painful duty to accuse and convict the editor of the "New Nation" of a piece of extremely unfair and unwise dealing. In speaking of the revolutionary "Communist Anarchists," and their efforts to establish compulsory "fraternal" communes by dynamite and other like means, Mr. Bellamy says: "At present there is little of this Anarchistic feeling in this country, except among immigrants who have brought it with them. As yet it finds little response from Americans, who still feel that, although frequently perverted, their government is yet their own, a tool with which to work out their salvation. Nationalism is therefore the only form of Socialism that finds as yet any following worth speaking of among Americans born in this country." Mr. Bellamy knows perfectly well that the "therefore" is altogether unwarranted. There is another "form of Socialism" which finds response and a following among "Americans born in this country"—namely, Anarchistic Socialism of the philosophical, individualistic, and evolutionary kind. By ignoring the part played by this school, Mr. Bellamy stultifies himself, for he but lately addressed an appeal to it, in which he urged harmonious co-operation.

Spencer and Proudhon.

To the Editor of Liberty:

About a year ago I enjoyed the highly esteemed privilege of a conversation with Mr. Herbert Spencer. That the distinguished philosopher did the lion's share of the talking was natural and satisfactory. It was evident that he had prepared himself in some measure for the meeting, for he discoursed fluently on three or four topics without so much as a pause for questions. I was pleased to discover from this slight personal contact what I had gathered from so much study of his writings as I had made—*i. e.*, that he was at heart an individualist, warmly jealous of the individual's welfare and hostile to (supposably) all forms of tyranny. It was not difficult, therefore, when his discourse had spent itself somewhat, to draw out explicit expressions upon special points that interested me more than others. It was gratifying, for instance, to learn that Mr. Spencer was keenly alive to the socialistic tendencies of contemporary legislation the world over; that he predicted that complete State Socialism would stamp the next great era in the world's history; and that State Socialism would surely collapse under its own weight of insupportable tyranny.

This was all intensely interesting to me, but I have no intention of expatiating on it here. The general conversation may serve as a fitting prelude to what came at last, and which I will report as accurately as possible and without comment.

Up to this point Mr. Spencer had said nothing that conflicted in the least with the doctrines of Proudhon—that is, as I understood them. In my ignorance it seemed to me that these two great philosophers would prove to be in substantial accord throughout, in spite, perhaps, of divergences in detail; and that if there was any apparent conflict between their respective systems, such conflict must be due to misapprehension on the part of one or the other thinker as to what his contemporary had set forth. In order to test this point, I ventured to ask Mr. Spencer how he rated Proudhon. There was an expression of surprise, I may almost say contempt, upon the Englishman's strong features, as he answered emphatically:

"I have never read Proudhon."

I was taken completely aback at this, so much so that I rushed in with perhaps a fatuity that an angel would not emulate, and expressed my own astonishment at the situation. Never mind what I said; Mr. Spencer's next remark was:

"Why should anybody suppose that I would read Proudhon?"

My reply was substantially as follows:

"There are a good many of us in America who have become greatly interested in Proudhon's views. All of us who have studied him have without exception, I think, kept pretty well informed as to your philosophy; and I must say that this comparative study, however cursory it may have been, has shown us that in very many fundamental matters you and Proudhon are in agreement. Further than this, we find in your works some of our strongest arguments for our support of Proudhon."

It was Mr. Spencer's turn to be taken aback.

"I am utterly astounded," he exclaimed, "that anybody in the world could find a line in my writings that should seem to lend any color of credit to Proudhon's doctrines. I cannot imagine what I can have said that could be so interpreted."

I insinuated as gently as possible that perhaps a little comparative study would disclose the extraordinary similarities.

"No," said Mr. Spencer emphatically. "I have never had anything to do with Proudhon, and I never shall. The only thing of his I ever read was his enunciation that 'property is robbery,' and that was quite enough for me. I can never tolerate any philosophy that fails to recognize the right of property."

I was tempted to pursue the matter further, not, of course, in the way of argument, but to suggest the one vital thought induced by Mr. Spencer's attitude—that it was disappointing to find a great philosopher so unphilosophical in his methods that he would reject a complete system upon a single utterance without even taking the pains to verify the utterance or understand its terms, to say nothing of investigating the chain of reasoning at the back of so impressive a statement; but for obvious reasons I held my peace. I may add that I have not quite recovered from my astonishment, and I sometimes wonder if Mr. Spencer has.

FREDERICK R. BURTON.

Socialistic Neighbor-Love.

To the Editor of Liberty:

Does it not seem as if, after all, the demands of egoistic Anarchists might be more altruistic than those of Socialists who condemn Anarchism as unaltruistic? For instance, it is by the growth of altruistic feeling that it is repugnant to many people to rob by violence; to some it is repugnant to rob, even by business methods.

Now, if I go still further, and refrain, through repugnance to such deeds, from compelling my neighbor to pay for what he does not want, am I not really more altruistic than my very altruistic friend who knows what his neighbor wants better than his neighbor himself knows, and who will make his neighbor pay, will-he, nill-he, for what he doesn't want?

Can anything be more unaltruistic than compulsory taxation?

Unless, like the dear God, who damns people because he loves them so, they rob people because they love them so.

JOHN BEVERLEY ROBINSON.

Liberty.

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"In abolishing rent and interest, the last vestige of old-time slavery, the Revolution abolishes at one stroke the sword of the executioner, the seal of the magistrate, the club of the policeman, the gauge of the exciseman, the erasing-knife of the department clerk, all those insignia of Politics, which young Liberty grinds beneath her heel."—PROUDHON.

☞ The appearance in the editorial column of articles over other signatures than the editor's initial indicates that the editor approves their central purpose and general tenor, though he does not hold himself responsible for every phrase or word. But the appearance in other parts of the paper of articles by the same or other writers by no means indicates that he disapproves them in any respect, such disposition of them being governed largely by motives of convenience.

The Price of Liberty.

Beginning with the present issue, the price of Liberty will be two dollars a year. But few people care to read journals which tell the truth, and as a consequence the privilege is costly and very precious. It is believed that the readers of Liberty sufficiently appreciate it to be willing to pay two dollars annually to help it in its struggle for existence.

Mr. Spencer in an Unenviable Light.

In a work entitled "The Study of Sociology" Herbert Spencer elaborately and ably and convincingly sets forth the difficulties that beset the path of the student of social science and catalogues the various forms of bias that vitiate human observation and testimony and reasoning. I doubt not that in this scheme some corner is provided for the particular bias which enables Mr. Spencer to criticise Proudhon without knowing anything of his works, but I find it difficult to classify it. It certainly is not the educational or the patriotic or the class or the political or the theological bias; must we call it the sociological bias? I have always maintained that the ridiculous passage in "Social Statics" in which Proudhon is treated as a Communist showed clearly that its author was utterly ignorant of the writings of the man whom he thus misrepresented. The remarkable letter from Frederick R. Burton, printed in another column, not only substantiates my claim, but shows that Mr. Spencer's ignorance is the wilful and determined ignorance of a prejudiced man; and his offence is rendered doubly inexcusable by its repetition in the revised edition of "Social Statics," which has just appeared. From this new edition many good things are omitted, but this very objectionable thing is retained. Despite the immense services which Mr. Spencer has unquestionably rendered to liberty, philosophy, and universal science, those of his less discriminating admirers who have been accustomed to look upon him as an utterly serene personage whose mind no prejudice could possibly tinge will find their idol, not shattered perhaps, but at any rate badly bruised, by Mr. Burton's revelations. And I find myself justified against those who thought me remiss in not calling Mr. Spencer's attention to the injustice he had done. Had I followed their advice, I should have had my labor for my pains. Mr. Spencer would think himself very badly treated should one of his critics class him as a theist because he spells Unknowable with a capital U, but it would be impossible to make him see that there is even less excuse, to one who has read Proudhon, for classing him as a Communist because of his phrase, "Property is robbery." T.

Reform and "Evolution."

Few readers of the "Twentieth Century" seem to have realized the significance of the manifesto on social problems which Mr. Pentecost published some time since, and the revolutions and changes of opinion which it reveals. Mr. Pentecost had long maintained with more persistency than reason, that social reform could be brought about in but one way—through the reform of individuals and the determination of each to do "right" irrespective of the consequences. "Teach men the truth, enlighten them on the subject of their rights and duties, and insist upon the absolute necessity of harmonizing belief and conduct. Having once perceived the truth, let each live, move, and have his being in it, regardless of any consideration of expediency. When all men shall thus thoroughly reform themselves, society will be what it ought to be." This had been substantially Mr. Pentecost's gospel up to the date of his discovery that the harmonization of belief and conduct is an utter impossibility for the individual who is intellectually and emotionally in advance of his fellows and who yet wishes to preserve his physical integrity. When Mr. Pentecost firmly grasped the truth that his gospel was the gospel of suicide, he relinquished it and substituted "pleasure" for "duty." Every individual was simply to endeavor to be happy in his own way; and if the happiness of one required the misery of another, Mr. Pentecost could not see any reason for interposing any objection. To favor *equal* liberty is manifestly to be but slightly less tyrannical than present governments; hence the most civilized way was declared to be that which proposes no limits to private actions. This new gospel, however, threw no light on the important problem of social reform. To the question how society is to be improved no answer was attempted.

Now this question is no longer in doubt. Mr. Pentecost has at last explicitly answered it, and his answer is indicative of a revolution in Mr. Pentecost's thought. The fact is Mr. Pentecost has made a grand discovery, he has discovered—Evolution. Society will be reformed by evolution; it is being reformed rather. But, instead of making a necessarily unsuccessful effort to translate Mr. Pentecost's language into my own, let me quote his own words.

> In what is your hope? In no "ism" whatever, but in the effort of each person to better himself, the sum of which we call evolution.

From the appearance of the first man till now the world has steadily grown pleasanter to live in, and the improvement has not been along the lines laid down by the ismists.

Rulers have put yokes on the people's necks, and when they have become unbearable the people have thrown them off, one by one, as rapidly as they could discover which particular yoke was chafing most painfully; and this rejection of yokes has been by individuals. One man refuses to wear a given yoke, and then another, and then another, until the number of rebels become so great that they cannot be controlled.

These yokes have been in the form of laws which, as time wore on, have been repealed, or become dead letters, or in the form of customs which cease. The process is as slow as geologic changes, imperceptible while going on, and which can only be marked by periods after a long backward look.

All the while the same process goes on. Isms appear and disappear, never one getting itself realized. Reform will not take the track the ists mark out for it. It goes on its own way by one individual after another slipping out from under one yoke after another.

After giving some illustrations of laws that "have become inoperative, not through defined movements for their abrogation, but through the refusal of individuals to submit to them,"—illustrations to which I will presently advert,—Mr. Pentecost concludes:

> The process of social evolution goes on, for the most part silently and without special apparent regard for "reformers," and in unexpected ways. . . . Waves of reform sweep over the world, spend themselves and disappear; and at their subsidence some persons are disposed to repine. But the intelligent observer understands that all is going well all the time; that individuals are always seeking to better themselves, and that the sum of individual efforts at betterment is what we call evolution, and that evolution is as ceaseless as the beating of the billows on the beach.
>
> Foolish persons pin their faith to and become infatuated with a "cause," and when the "cause" wanes and dies they give up hope. But "causes" always fail, or, at least, are very apt to. Evolution, however, the aggregate of individual efforts, never fails. In that is our hope. That is our solace and cheer. He who understands what evolution is and how it works never despairs of the ultimate happiness of the race.

I heartily congratulate Mr. Pentecost on his remarkable discovery. It has long been my profound conviction that the man who does not understand what evolution is and how it works makes but an indifferent teacher and reformer. Mr. Pentecost's usefulness will be immeasurably increased now that he has evolution to guide him in his reformatory labors.

But what am I saying? Why, I am simply betraying not only my own ignorance of evolution, but also my incapacity to comprehend the logic of Mr. Pentecost's present position. Does it not follow from "evolution" that it is foolish to be a reformer and work for any cause or ism? What is the use of organizing movements and forming plans when evolution, frustrating all these vain attempts, turns reform into other tracks than those marked out for it by ists? No, those who understand evolution will not trouble themselves about reform, the fact being ever present in their consciousness that "all is going well all the time," because "individuals are always seeking to better themselves."

Now all this is very important, if true. None of us care to pin any faith in a cause and work for any ism when evolution relieves us from this fruitless and ridiculous task. Let us, therefore, study Mr. Pentecost's illustrations and verify his conclusions. If he is

right, we must send in our resignations at once. We read:

The rulers cannot compel men to attend church or pay tithes in this country as they once could. That is one yoke that has been thrown off.

They cannot compel men to observe the Puritanic Sunday as they once could. This is another yoke that has been thrown off.

They cannot compel them to observe certain sumptuary laws, though they are on the statute books as large as life, and strenuous efforts are made to enforce them.

The tariff law is another illustration in point. Almost every person is a free trader in so far as the tariff law bears upon him, as an individual; consequently the government is powerless to prevent the vast amount of smuggling that constantly goes on under the very noses of and with the collusion of the customs officials.

Divorce laws furnish another illustration of the subject in hand. Time was when a divorced person was shunned as immoral, but now divorces are obtained in the very "best" circles of society without the divorced persons losing the slightest social caste. Each year divorce is becoming easier, for the reason that many unhappily married persons simply will not live together, and legislators must accommodate themselves to the wishes of the people in order to retain their occupations as law makers.

These are all the "illustrations" but one. I could easily tell what the use of them by Mr. Pentecost illustrates, but I confess I fail to see what *they* illustrate. The rulers cannot compel us to attend church: has not this been long contested; have not "ists" fought for the "cause" of freedom of conscience? Before Mr. Pentecost takes leave of this illustration, he must show that the work of the foolish ists has not contributed to the result. Again: have not ists opposed sumptuary laws in the name of liberty — a "cause?" Is not, further, free trade a cause for which ists have pleaded and continue to plead? Have not the ists weakened protection in England? Finally are not liberal divorce laws demanded by ists, and has not their agitation tended to make divorce respectable? In each instance we find that the ubiquitous ists have, in the name of a cause, labored faithfully and long to secure the very end which is claimed to be the result of "evolution." Is Mr. Pentecost prepared to assert that evolution would have accomplished all these results even if the ists had not championed their respective causes, and had remained indifferent to the evils and burdens from which they and their fellows suffered?

Well yes, and no, Mr. Pentecost is not really prepared to assert this, although he tacitly makes the assertion by drawing an absurd and meaningless distinction, as will be gleaned from the following.

Social evils are all in the form of restrictive laws and customs. Restriction is the evil out of which all evils flow. Men hate restriction when they feel it, and when they feel it sharply enough they throw it off. They throw it off, as a rule, one by one. Revolutions are infrequent. Evolution — each man bettering himself, making himself more comfortable — is incessant.

What is needed, then, is not to organize men into isms, but to point out to them one by one which yoke it is that galls.

Most men know they are galled. Few know what galls them. Point that out to them and they will get rid of it, not by a system, but each in his own way, and when enough are determined not to be galled any longer by a given yoke the rulers are powerless to impose that yoke any longer.

We do want preachers and teachers and reformers after all, it seems, but we do not want any cause or system. Those who have a cause to champion are silly ists, while those who content themselves with enunciating and prating certain propositions are good fellows without whom evolution could not do its work. Point out to men that free trade is advantageous and that smuggling is not wrong, and you are a factor, a helpful and wise man; but the moment you forget yourself so far as to pin your faith to the cause of Free Trade you are a miserable ist, ignorant of evolution. Abjure capital letters, for by the use or non-use of them do wise men distinguish between ists and others. Forbear to denominate yourself a free-trader; say simply that you conceive free trade to be advantageous. Always bear in mind that between the sublime and the ludicrous there is but one short step. Mr. Pentecost, with his insight into the methods of evolution, teaches us how to become sublime.

One may be permitted, however, to remark that Mr. Pentecost's conclusions do not follow from his premises. His syllogism is:

Individuals are always seeking to better themselves, and the sum of individual efforts at betterment is what we call evolution.

Most men know they are galled. Few know what galls them.

Therefore point out to men what galls them and they will seek to get rid of it.

But it manifestly does not follow from the premises that, in pointing out to men what galls them, the use of capital letters must be religiously avoided. It does not follow that we cannot call ourselves ists and have a cause. It does not follow that we ought to defend free trade instead of Free Trade. In fine, all that Mr. Pentecost says about isms, systems, and causes, is a gratuitous addition which he improperly claims as being included in the inferences drawn from his premises.

Seeing that Mr. Pentecost is guilty of one logical fallacy, we are naturally led to reexamine his premises and make sure that he has not sinned against us and logic in other ways. His minor premise is indisputable, but how about the major premise? "Individuals are always seeking to better themselves"— this proposition is not absolutely true, but it may be admitted to be as true as any postulate of political economy — "and the sum of individual efforts at betterment is what we call evolution." But, dear Mr. Pentecost, what is the basis or authority for *this* statement? The sum of individual efforts at betterment may be what *you* call evolution, but it is not evolution. And what do you mean by "betterment?" The context plainly shows that the efforts at betterment referred to are the efforts of those who violate certain laws that impair their comfort. Thus smugglers seek to better themselves by obtaining higher profits on their goods. But those who are not pecuniarily interested in smuggling and who merely defend freedom of trade on theoretical grounds, perhaps at no small personal sacrifice, are not referred to, and hence their educational efforts are not represented in the sum total of efforts called evolution. Evolution, in a word, is the sum total of the efforts of practical law breakers, while the efforts of scientists, philosophers, teachers, reformers, ists, are not "in it." Still it would be a grave error to impute to Mr Pentecost any desire to speak disparagingly of teachers and philosophers in general. Only the reformers and ists are parasites. The teachers who are not ists are, indeed, greater than evolution; they are the creators, authors of evolution; they are the power behind evolution. Do they not point out to those men and women whose efforts, in their totality, constitute evolution, what it is that galls them, and what it is that they need to get rid of? Hence they are the authors of evolution. Without them there might still be individual efforts at betterment, but there would not be any evolution, since evolution is the sum of intelligent efforts in the right direction.

But it is not my intention to discourage Mr. Pentecost. One thing is certain — he has at last discovered that evolution is a reality which has to be taken into account in all discussions of social problems. This constitutes a wonderful advance. As yet Mr. Pentecost does not know just what evolution is or how evolution works, but even the discovery of scientific truth proceeds in accordance with law.

V. Y.

Government's Fatal Hand.

A series of three remarkable letters has lately appeared in the London "Times" over the signature of "Parlementaire," voicing the growing complaints of private manufacturers of ordnance in Great Britain against an unfair government rivalry with which they have to contend in their business. It appears that the British government has been and is in the habit of inducing private firms and corporations, by virtual promises of extensive and continuous patronage, to invest immense sums in laying down a plant for the manufacture of the latest thing in guns or ammunition, and then, after a few preliminary orders sufficient to show the manufacturing process in its perfection, of transferring its patronage to the government factories, first equipping them with a similar plant. It is claimed that such a course is not only unjust to the private firms in question, but harmful to the country and liable to prove fatal in time of war. For the private firms, unable to let their capital lie idle, must reinvest it in other branches of manufacture, and, when war comes, taxing the government factories to the utmost with its pressing demand for additional material, it will be found that the needed power of expansion in the production thereof has vanished with the disappearance of the private works, to say nothing of the dangerous plight in which the nation would find itself with no sources of war material to fall back upon, in case of the capture of Woolwich by the enemy. This is an excellent instance of the far-reaching consequences of that taint which governmentalism imparts to everything upon which it lays its fatal hand. The British government, unable on the one hand to resist the prevailing tendency to the absorption of private enterprise by the State, and unable on the other hand to develop within itself that originality and initiative needed in order to keep pace with progress in military science, finds itself obliged to purchase this originality of individuals, paying for it in delusive promises, which it straightway must break, with the immediate result of crippling a prosperous industry and the possible ultimate result of destroying the nation itself.

E.

Writing in an electrical journal on the advantages of electricity to society, Otis K. Stuart estimates by careful figuring that the annual saving of time in the United States alone through the substitution of electric for horse-power on street railways will amount to ten million man-days, whereby employers will have the power to grant an annual holiday to the working-people without loss to themselves or their employees. Yes, they will have the power, but will they have the will? Most certainly not. The greater part of the benefit of this improvement, as of nearly all others, will be enjoyed by capital as long as the supply of labor exceeds the demand. And this excess of supply will last until we have free money and free land.

An Anachronism.

[N. Y. Post.]

A writer in the April "International Journal of Ethics" gives a somewhat laudatory account of the Manchester "Labor Church." He does not give, however, the "principles" upon which the novel organization is founded. These we extract from a copy of its "Form of Membership":

(1.) That the labor movement is a religious movement.

(2.) That the religion of the labor movement is not a class religion, but unites members of all classes in working for the abolition of wage-slavery.

(3.) That the religion of the labor movement is not sectarian or dogmatic, but free religion, leaving each man free to develop his relations with the Power that brought him into being.

(4.) That the emancipation of labor can only be realized so far as men learn both the economic and moral laws of God, and heartily endeavor to obey them.

(5.) That the development of personal character and the improvement of social conditions are both essential to man's emancipation from moral and social bondage.

Any one who, "having carefully read the above principles," desires to become a member, can do so without further formalities. Some idea of the activities contemplated by the "Labor Church" may be gathered from the questions asked of those who are "willing to undertake work" for it: "Is there any work you feel specially fitted for? Can you sing? Can you play any musical instrument? Or are you willing to learn?" All this is dangerously near the visionary and the ludicrous, yet it has its pathetic side also. There is no lack of moral earnestness behind this endeavor, nor ought one hastily to say that it is absolutely lacking in intelligence when such university men as P. H. Wicksteed lend it their sanction; yet the whole scheme is so predominantly fantastic that it can only serve to illustrate afresh the foolish and futile things that may be undertaken with the best intentions.

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